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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: FEBRUARY 02, 2010

Summary: Coverage of Army Chief General Kayani's statement that "Pakistan doesn't want to control Afghanistan," dominated headlines in all newspapers on Tuesday morning. President Obama's budget proposal for FY 2011 received wide coverage in Pakistani media, and nearly all papers highlighted reports that the administration has sought Congressional approval for a "substantial increase" in economic and security aid for Pakistan. Media also reported the arrest of an American national along with a Pakistani in Jamrud (Khyber Agency of FATA) for traveling without necessary documents. Speculation surrounding the reported death of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Chief Hakimullah Mehsud continued to garner media coverage today. Some newspapers published a New York Times report that U.S. and Pakistani officials are "increasingly convinced" that Mehsud is dead, and "The News" reported that a local Taliban commander Malik Noor Jamal alias Maulana Toofan is officiating as the acting head of the banned outfit. Several major newspapers highlighted the U.S. donation of 40 ambulances to four district health departments. Both electronic and print media reported that the trial of Dr. Aafia has entered its final stage. All newspapers highlighted a suicide bomb explosion in Baghdad killing Shia pilgrims. End Summary.

TOP STORIES

News Story: Kayani Spells Out Terms For Regional Stability - "Dawn" (02/02)

"Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani said on Monday the success of military operations in the tribal regions have caused substantial decline in cross-border attacks on Nato forces in Afghanistan and warned that it was essential to address Pakistan's long-term strategic concerns for stability in the region. In a rare press briefing, General Kayani said it would be a cause of worry for Pakistan if Afghanistan's projected army developed the potential to take on Pakistan 'We want a strategic depth in Afghanistan but do not want to control it,' the general said while talking to a group of journalists at the Army General Headquarters."

News Story: Pakistan Doesn't Want A 'Talibanised' Afghanistan - "Daily Times" (02/02)

"Chief of Army Staff Gen Ashfaq Kayani has denied that Pakistan wants a "Talibanised" Afghanistan, and said his country has no interest in controlling Afghanistan. 'We can't wish for anything for Afghanistan that we don't wish for ourselves,' Kayani was quoted as saying by the AFP news agency on his return from Brussels in a rare address to foreign journalists - much of which was devoted to Afghanistan."

News Story: Obama Admin Seeks Raise In Economic, Security Aid For Pakistan - "The News" (02/02)

"The Obama administration has sought congressional approval for substantial increase in funding US assistance for Pakistan in the 2011 fiscal budget with a focus on economic development, energy projects and improvement in counterinsurgency capability of Pakistani security forces."

News Story: Obama Seeks Aid Boost For Pakistan, Afghanistan - "Dawn" (02/02)

"In a document issued on Monday with the Obama administration's first \$3.8 trillion budget, the White House described strengthening governance in Pakistan and Afghanistan as one of its high-priority goals. Under the title, 'High-priority performance goals,' the White House Office of Management and Budget stressed that 'strengthening Afghanistan's and Pakistan's capacity to effectively provide services to citizens' was one of the administration's main goals for the next fiscal year."

News Story: American, Pakistani Arrested In Jamrud - "Daily Times" (02/02)

"The political administration of Jamrud tehsil of Khyber Agency on Monday arrested an American national and his Pakistani companion, officials said. Official sources told Daily Times that Brid Metho and his friend, Rafi Malik, were arrested in Wazirzhand area after they illegally entered Jamrud from the Karkhano Market area in Peshawar. They said the men entered an area that is off-limits to foreigners without government authorization."

News Story: US, Pakistani Officials Believe Mehsud Is Dead - "Daily Times" (02/02)

"Pakistani and US officials are increasingly convinced that Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan Chief Hakeemullah Mehsud has died from injuries sustained in a drone strike, The New York Times reported late on Sunday."

News Story: Maulana Toofan new acting TTP chief- "The News" (02/02)

"As reports of Hakimullah Mehsud's death continued to circulate despite denials by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), reports from Orakzai Agency said a local Taliban commander Malik Noor Jamal alias Maulana Toofan was officiating as the acting head of the banned organization. The reports said Malik Noor Jamal would head the organization until the TTP leadership decides its next course of action."

News Story: U.S. Donates 40 Ambulances To Four More District Health Departments - "Pakistan observer," "Jang," "Express," "Jinnah," "Al-Akhbar," (02/02)

"In a ceremony held in Lahore, the United States government donated 40 ambulances to the Dadu, Jafferabad, Vehari and Multan district health departments. The ambulances will help save the lives of those in need of urgent medical care, especially pregnant women and newborns, by providing more rapid access to local health centers."

TERRORISM/MILITARY ISSUES

News Story: US Must Reassure Pak Of 'Credible Commitment': Defence Review - "The Nation" (02/02)

"US Defence Secretary Robert Gates has ordered the Air Force and Navy to study what future joint weapons system, available 20 years from now, will be able to surveil an enemy target, survive any electronic interference, and then deliver precision strikes from platforms that either penetrate the foe's defences or are launched from a distance, according to a report published in The Washington Post. . . . In discussing the region of Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, the QDR states that Washington must reassure partners of a 'credible long-term commitment, deter regional actors from aggression while balancing that requirement against regional sensitivity to a large, long-term US force presence'."

News Story: NATO Offers To Train Pakistani Officers- "Dawn" (02/02)

"NATO and Pakistan have discussed ways to boost cooperation, and the military alliance stands ready to train Pakistani officers if requested, Nato Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said on Monday."

News Story: Efforts Begin To Identify Reconcilable Taliban - "Dawn" (02/02)

"Serious efforts have begun in Islamabad, Washington and Kabul to identify reconcilable elements in Afghan Taliban ranks following an international endorsement at the London Conference last week of President Karzai's reintegration plan. The United States, which wants the integration plan to be operationalised by middle of the year, requires the support of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, senior diplomats said on Monday."

News Story: Forces Capture Important Hilltop In Bajaur - "The News" (02/02)

"Security forces backed by gunship helicopters and fighter jets took control of a strategically important hilltop in Khaza Sar and Damadola in the Mamond subdivision of Bajaur Agency after fierce clashes with militants on Monday."

News Story: Thousands Flee As 22 Killed In Bajaur - "Dawn" (02/02)

"At least 22 militants were killed and 12 others injured when military planes, helicopter gunships and artillery attacked militants' hideouts in Bajaur Agency on Monday."

News Story: Tanker Carrying Oil For Nato Blown Up - "Dawn" (02/02)

"A tanker carrying fuel for Nato forces in Afghanistan was blown up here on Monday. Police said the tanker from the Attock Oil Refinery was attacked by heavily armed militants on the Rind Road."

News Story: Defence Highlights Lack Of Coherence In Testimony Against Dr Aafia Siddiqui - "Daily Times" (02/02)

"The trial of Aafia Siddiqui, the Pakistani scientist charged with shooting at her US interrogators in Afghanistan, moved into the final stage on Monday, with defence lawyers highlighting in their final arguments the lack of coherence in the accounts by prosecution witnesses."

News Story: No Quick Breakthrough Expected In Afghan Talks - "Daily Times" (02/02)

"President Hamid Karzai has launched a high profile push to reconcile with his 'disenchanted brothers' in the Taliban, but few in Afghanistan see hope for a quick breakthrough while fighters smell victory on the battlefield."

POLITICAL ISSUES

News Story: India Hints At Talks With Pakistan- "Dawn" (02/02)

"Indian Home Minister P. Chidambaram said on Monday that bilateral talks with Pakistan could be on the anvil if he visited Islamabad for the Saarc interior ministers conference."

News Story: US, Nato Holding Dialogue With Taliban: Imran - "The Nation" (02/02)

"Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan on Monday dispelled the impression that mid-term elections would weaken the country, saying that if the current government completed its term, God forbid, Pakistan might not complete its time. Addressing a news conference here on Monday, Imran said that Pakistani Taliban were product of military operations. 'The United States and Nato are holding talks with Taliban, but we are killing our own people in our own country,' he said"

News Story: America Will Run From Afghanistan And The Region Like Russia: Hafiz Saeed "Nawa-i-Waqt" (02/02)

"Jamaatud Dawa Chief Hafiz Saeed addressed a Nation/Nawa-i-Waqt/Waqt TV seminar on "Pakistan's domestic and foreign policy and external

interference" yesterday. Chief Editor Majid Nizami was also present during the seminar. Hafiz Saeed praised Nawa-i-Waqt and Majid Nizami and said Mr Nizami defends the ideology of Pakistan like a general...Hafiz Saeed said that I can foresee a bright future; American and allied troops will leave the region after facing the worst possible defeat. America would neither be able to remain in the Gulf, nor any other country... He said a decision has been taken in the mountains of Afghanistan that America's superpower status will not remain much longer. . . [He added] America is held together by its economy, as the economy weakens [American] states will start breaking away, but Muslims are united by their faith...He said it was unfortunate that the Defense Minister says we do not have the capability of shooting down drones, although drones have been shot down [by the tribesmen]. He said our rulers must stop being scared of the U.S. and act courageously."

ECONOMY/ENVIRONMENT

News Story: Filling Of Mangla, Hydropower Projects In Jeopardy - "Dawn" (02/02)

"The filling of Mangla Dam's additional 2.33 MAF (million acre feet) storage capacity built at a cost of more than Rs 90 billion and construction of cheap hydropower projects of about 4,500MW are in jeopardy because of non-implementation of the dam's up-raising agreement and three provinces' opposition to allocation of water for Azad Kashmir."

MISCELLANEOUS

News Story: Female Suicide Bomber Kills 54 In Baghdad - "The News" (02/02)

"A female suicide bomber detonated her explosives inside a way station for pilgrims here on Monday, killing 54 people and rattling security officials who are struggling against a possible rise in violence before key elections next month. The attack was the third major strike by suspected insurgents in a week and left Baghdad's top security official acknowledging that extremists are adopting new methods to outwit bomb-detection squads such as stashing explosives deep inside the engines and frames of vehicles."

EDITORIALS/OPINIONS

Editorial: Dead Again, an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/02)

'The military has confirmed that it is investigating reports that Hakimullah Mehsud has died in Orakzai as a consequence of wounds inflicted during a recent drone strike. Determining the truth behind these rumors is hard given the inaccessibility of the areas hit by conflict. But what can safely be said is that evidence is emerging that the Taliban are more split than before."

Editorial: Hakeemullah Again, an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/02)

". . . . What is interesting though is the facts that the news was announced on state television when routinely breaking news emanate from private news channels. While neither Pakistani or US officials nor ISPR was willing to confirm the report, PTV went ahead to air this news report, which could be termed as speculative at best in the absence of credible evidence. Whether it was an attempt to cause unrest among their ranks - as the Taliban claim - would become clear only after the dust has settled and proof has emerged that Hakeemullah is indeed dead, or otherwise. All one can do at this point is speculate."

Editorial: Policy Shift Needed, an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/02)

". . . West must be told in no uncertain terms to compensate Pakistan sufficiently for providing a yeoman's service in its war. But the government must also realise that it is finally the time to break ranks with the Americans. While they are packing up and leaving, given the humiliation that they have to suffer in Afghanistan, they want us to keep playing those ugly games. The drone attacks are intensifying a severe backlash. Reportedly, the US

intends to continue the strikes for many years to come. The Foreign Minister must realise that this is a ploy to keep Pakistan embroiled in the conflict. The situation calls for removing these foreign policy dilemmas."

Opinion: Courting The Taliban, an op-ed by Rahimullah Yusufzai in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/02)

"As parties to the conflict in Afghanistan plot their next move following the international conference in London, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have come under focus as the two countries best placed to bring the Afghan Taliban to the negotiating table. However, there is a crucial difference in the roles that Afghanistan and the US and its allies want to assign to Islamabad and Riyadh. While Saudi Arabia has been requested to mediate between the government of President Hamid Karzai and the Taliban, Pakistan among other neighbours of Afghanistan was asked to back the Afghan peace process. Islamabad was hoping to play an important role in resolving the Afghan conflict through its contacts with the Mulla Mohammad Omar-led Taliban, but it seems it isn't seen as a neutral player by the parties to the dispute and, therefore, unacceptable as mediator."

Opinion: Light At The End Of The Tunnel, an op-ed by Javid Husain in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/02)

". . . . At present neither the Taliban nor the coalition forces are in a position to prevail. They, therefore, need to make use of dialogue and negotiations to find a way out of the current difficult situation. There is increasing recognition of this reality by the US officials. For instance, US General Stanley McChrystal in a recent interview with the Financial Times remarked: "As a soldier, my personal feeling is that there's been enough fighting. I believe that a political solution to all conflicts is the inevitable outcome." He wanted "to shape conditions which allow the people to come to a truly equitable solution to how the Afghan people are governed." He also did not rule out the possibility of seeing Taliban leaders in a future government in Kabul. . . ."

Editorial: Preparation For An Operation In North Waziristan, an editorial note in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (02/02)

"Foreign Minister Shah Mehmud Qureshi has said that after South Waziristan, there will be an operation in North Waziristan as well for which we are considering resources and other matters... During his recent visit to Pakistan, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates pressed Pakistan for an operation in North Waziristan, a pressure that the government boldly rejected... But the Foreign Minister's intent to start an operation in North Waziristan has dashed the nation's hopes... War is not the solution to any issue and as Nato Commander Stanley McChrystal has said, there has been enough war in Afghanistan, we must now look for a political solution. If the U.S. is ready for talks with the Taliban, Pakistan should also resolve matters along the same lines with the extremists."

Editorial: Uncontrollable Increase In Petroleum Prices: Is The Government Paving The Way For A Bloody Revolution, an editorial in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (02/02)

"The government must revise the decision to increase prices of petroleum products. The Supreme Court Chief Justice must also take suo moto notice of this cruelty on the Pakistani nation as this step by the government could take the society towards turmoil."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)

Patterson